SANTI SAYS: Count your blessings

By Santi Meunier

I am so pleased to be writing my first column for *02835*. Writing a column has been a dream of mine for some time. In my experience, not only as a success coach but as a human being, some goals can take a very long time to manifest. It is our ability to trust in our dreams, to feed them and nurture them on a regular basis and, most importantly, not to quit on them before they come true that makes all the difference in our lives.

Thanksgiving is tomorrow. The shopping is done, invitations issued and pies waiting to be picked up. All these details have kept us so busy that we may forget that the season is about more than feasting. Carving out time to reflect on our blessings can help us appreciate Thanksgiving more fully. As Aesop once said, "Gratitude is the sign of noble souls."

Focus on gratitude

Each year as our family and friends are gathered around the table before the feast begins, each person shares the reasons they are grateful. It is said that we strengthen what we focus on, so let us focus on gratitude and sharing with the people we love, the things that make us sing and smile.

When we set about to cook Thanksgiving dinner we gather all our ingredients together. So, another wonderful exercise is to have everyone prepare a "Baker's Dozen" gratitude list. Such as:

I am grateful for this beautiful island and the blue that surrounds us with the sea and sky.

I am grateful for the gull's cry and the crashing of the waves at Beavertail.

I am grateful for my cozy home that shelters me from storms. And so on.

Sharing these things is also a way for people to know us better, to glimpse inside, to see how we view life.

Remember the lonely

Many people may feel very low this holiday season. Sorrow can feel like a weighted cape, too heavy to carry. Lonely and unsupported, Thanksgiving commercials of loving families gathered around a bountiful table can cut right to the depth of our despair. There are no easy answers, but there are some truths that can pull us through: No one escapes pain in life; it will pass, and when it does, compassion and understanding can fill the void.

If we know of someone in pain, let's ask ourselves: What can I do to help?

One year, I had a friend whose husband was coming home on leave. She wanted to cook him a Thanksgiving dinner but had no money for the food. I got the idea to buy her the groceries and leave them on her doorstep. I felt so happy to be able to do this. The key, however, was to do it anonymously.

Her husband came home. They celebrated and had a wonderful visit. A week later, when I met her for coffee she relayed the story of her "mystery" donor. I felt so happy inside knowing that I had made a difference. Then she said that she had figured out that the wonderful person must be her elderly neighbor. I felt my ego shout, "No! It wasn't him. It was me! I'm the good one."

Learning humility

I had to laugh to myself. That is why we do these things anonymously — to learn humility. The joy I felt was in the giving, in sharing and spreading happiness. Helen Steiner Rice wrote, "The joy of enjoying, and the fullness of living, are found in the heart filled with Thanksgiving."

I invite you all to share your blessings with me in this column, as well as your questions and concerns. It is my hope that "Santi Says" will serve as an open dialogue for the community. We all need people to wish us well and to cheer us on and to give us hope. Please write to me at Galactca@aol.com using "Santi Says" as the topic or send your questions to *02835*, 65 Narragansett Avenue, Second Floor, Jamestown, RI 02835.

Happy Thanksgiving, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Santi Meunier, MA, a Jamestown resident, earned her masters in Counseling Psychology from Norwich University. She has written three books, produced a film and founded Connections to Life, a nonprofit that provides support, comfort and inspiration to cancer patients and their caregivers. She founded Galactica Institute for Personal Development, counseling service.